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June 16, 2009

The Honorable Craig Fugate
Administrator
Office of the Director
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

I write regarding FEMA's efforts to establish "base camps" to provide temporary housing for citizens displaced in a natural disaster. You will be pleased to learn that I have already introduced legislation to this effect, and would be glad to assist you in improving disaster preparedness, training, and response.

As you know, disaster preparedness is of special concern to Floridians. In the last ten years Florida has been affected by twenty major disasters caused by hurricanes and tropical storms. In the aftermath of those events, the communities affected by these disasters have experienced great hardship due to the lack of adequate temporary housing and ineffective coordination of federal resources and efforts. To cite one example, citizens were still living in FEMA trailers more than 18 months after Hurricane Wilma struck in 2005.

While I applaud FEMA's efforts to establish "base camps," I am worried that in its present form the project, which is expected to serve 300-2,000 people, will not be sufficient for a major disaster. For example, Hurricane Katrina, which damaged or destroyed over one million homes in the Gulf States, also displaced many hundreds of thousands of people, tens of thousands of whom were forced to rely on FEMA, the Red Cross, and other humanitarian organizations for temporary shelter. Simply put, FEMA's current "base camps" project is not enough.

In January 2009, I introduced H.R. 645, the *National Emergency Centers Establishment Act*. This legislation establishes six National Emergency Centers throughout the United States to be used as central locations for temporary housing and humanitarian relief in the event of a major

natural disaster. In addition, these centers can be used year-round for coordinated training and preparedness efforts for first responders from public and private agencies.

These National Emergency Centers would be located on military bases, preferably those which were closed during the most recent round of Base Realignment and Closures (BRAC). Such sites are effective for disaster relief and management purposes because they already contain the necessary infrastructure to house, feed, transport, care for, and educate thousands of persons at a time, including space for stockpiling large amounts of humanitarian relief supplies.

Furthermore, making use of these bases would be cheaper, quicker, and more effective than contracting private companies to create new facilities. The availability of barracks, kitchens, warehouses, hospitals, and transportation facilities at these bases – all of which can be quickly upgraded or retrofitted – would mitigate the need to build them from scratch.

I look forward to working with you to develop the most efficient and effective means of disaster preparedness, training, response, and recovery plans. Thank you for your attention to this matter. With warm regards, I remain,

Sincerely,


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress